

Western Democracy has become the Opposite of What It is Meant to Be

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China's People's Daily Interview with prominent Serbian author and former Foreign Minister Zivadin Jovanovic

1. Many people are still shocked at the result of US presidential election this year. Some experts say this is the abuse of the liberal democracy. What are main faults or wrongs of west democracies?

R. : I would say that lack of democratic substance is the main deficiency of nowadays western type of democracy. **Western democracy has become opposite of what is meant to be.** People who are supposed to be sovereign factor of the democratic decision making process have been reduced to a mere cover up for behind the scene informal but powerful groups deciding on any major issue, including decisions on peace and war. Democracy means freedom, objective information, and humanism. How much do we recognize these values in real life, in practice? Millions of citizens are being spied by their own governments, hundreds of millions misled daily by false information of global corporate information systems, daily abuse of human rights and international terrorism for promotion of imperial domination and greedy interests, rising massive unemployment and poverty, degradation of education, culture, revival of racism and xenophobia...Are those the values to be exported from the West to the rest of the world through "regime changes", "colored revolutions" and other subversive methods?!

So called democratic institutions, such as parliaments, for example, have become empty shells, rubber-stamping decisions brought about elsewhere, even outside of the country they formally belong to. What democratic institutions decided on NATO aggression on Yugoslavia in 1999, or on Iraq in 2003, or on Libya, Yemen and so many other countries? Which parliaments decided on trillions of US dollars and trillions of Euros paid in 2008 and 2009 to bail out private banks and Insurance Companies in USA and Europe? Even if those trillions were newly printed money, the enormous losses caused by mismanagement and corruption of private sector remains to be paid by coming generations.

2. In 2016, some impressive referendums occurred in European countries, such as UK, Hungary, Switzerland, Austria and Italy. Can we say the phenomenon means the victory of direct democracy? Some people say this is only the victory of populism in Europe. What are your opinions on the frequent referendums? What's the limitations of direct democracy and why most countries didn't adopt such voting system in the long past?

R.: Every referendum has own specifics depending on culture, tradition, history, geopolitical needs and circumstances. Switzerland, for example, has long tradition of frequent

referendums and there is nothing unusual that such a practice is being continued.

As for the other referendums such as Brexit, Hungary, Italy and alike, I think that they come as revolt to systematic disrespect of the real needs and real will of the people, reaction to the prolonged falling living standards. Results of referendums, although different from one to the other country, have in common despair and distrust of people towards ruling elite, towards what is called establishment. These results point to the general problem of extreme alienation of the establishment from masses of peoples who feel having been stripped way, deprived of their basic democratic and human rights. There is high possibility of even more frequent referendums to follow in the other countries. Whether inevitable changes of the prevailing inhumane liberal corporate socio-economic system can be achieved through referendums only, or it will be necessary to contemplate more complex approaches involving return of powers to the other institutions, remains to be seen. It is certain, however, bureaucracy and plutocracy, on national and international levels, will not voluntarily strip themselves of their privileges and accumulated powers.

Revival of referendums is a reaction of masses to the liberal corporate capitalistic system serving the interests of handful of the richest ignoring the legitimate interests of majority. Populism as political phenomena should be analyzed primarily to find out what are its causes, its roots? The term "populism" is used by the western establishments and their mass-media to defend the status quo, to defend their enormous privileges portraying any demands for inevitable change negative.

3. Many Europeans feel angered about the inability of EU leaders to tackle the crisis such as refugees, terrorism and Brexit. Some people say the weakness of EU lies in the overuse of democracy. In the West, surveys show a fall in the level of support for democracy among young people. Many seem to think it would be nice to have a "strong chief" or a "big man" with a simple message and easy solutions. How do you see the failure of west democracy?

R.: Brexit has destabilized EU and has opened Pandora Box with unforeseeable consequences. Influential political forces in other EU member countries are advocating similar moves in a not too distant future. Up to now, EU leadership has not come out with any convincing answers about the common future. Rising problems of refugees, massive migration, growing international terrorism, unemployment, socio-economic gaps on national and international levels, slow economic growth and many other problems, have uncovered divisions, weakening of mutual trust, rise of egoism, euro-skepticism.

All these problems, in my opinion, are interconnected consequences of the systematic crisis of corporate liberal capitalism and uni-polar world order. While defenders of the uni-polar World Order are losing ground and support to the multi-polar World Order is growing, even in the West, it is symptomatic that the need for parallel change of the concept of liberal multinational corporate capitalism is somehow out of the focus. It is still not understood that uni-polar World Order and corporate liberal capitalism are firmly interconnected. The system which is undergoing prolonged severe crisis, which is dehumanizing and even destroying societies and destabilizing international relations, which upholds profit above any civilization value, can hardly be sustainable. It is time to think ahead. Human needs, freedom, equality and solidarity should return to the center of national and international attention.

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